

In the Claims

Claims 1 - 28 (Cancelled)

29. (New) A nonwoven fabric containing ultra-fine fibers, which contains staple fibers with a fiber fineness of 0.0001 to 0.5 decitex and a fiber length of 10 cm or less, and has a weight per unit area of 100 to 550 g/m², an apparent density of 0.280 to 0.700 g/cm³, a tensile strength of 70 N/cm or more, and a tear strength of 3 to 50 N.

30. (New) The nonwoven fabric according to claim 29, wherein said staple fibers are 1 cm or more and entangled with each other.

31. (New) The nonwoven fabric according to claim 29, wherein the 10% modulus in the length direction is 8 N/cm or more.

32. (New) The nonwoven fabric according to claim 29, wherein said staple fibers are polyester-based fibers and/or polyamide-based fibers.

33. (New) A method for producing a nonwoven fabric containing ultra-fine fibers as set forth in claim 29, comprising:

needle-punching composite fibers of 1 to 10 decitexes convertible into bundles of ultra-fine fibers of 0.0001 to 0.5 decitex, to produce a nonwoven fabric containing composite fibers, and performing hydro-entanglement at a pressure of at least 10 MPa.

34. (New) The method according to claim 33, wherein the nonwoven fabric containing composite fibers produced by said needle punching has an apparent density of 0.120 to 0.300 g/cm³.

35. (New) The method according to claim 33, wherein a nozzle having holes with a diameter of 0.06 to 0.15 mm is used to perform said hydro-entanglement.

36. (New) The method according to claim 33, wherein a treatment for forming ultra-fine fibers is performed after performing said needle punching, but before performing said hydro-entanglement and/or simultaneously with said hydro-entanglement.

37. (New) The method according to claim 33, wherein splitting into two or more sheets perpendicularly to the thickness direction is performed before performing said hydro-entanglement.

38. (New) The method according to claim 33, wherein pressing to 0.1 to 0.8 time in thickness is performed after performing said hydro-entanglement.

39. (New) A leather-like sheet comprising a nonwoven fabric and made of a fiber material of substantially a non-elastic polymer.

40. (New) A leather-like sheet which contains a dyed nonwoven fabric containing ultra-fine fibers with a fiber fineness of 0.0001 to 0.5 decitex, a fiber length of 10 cm or less, a weight per unit area of 100 to 550 g/m² and an apparent density of 0.230 to 0.700 g/cm³, and has a tear strength of 3 to 50 N and satisfies the following formula:

$$\text{Tensile strength (N/cm)} \geq 0.45 \times \text{Weight per unit area (g/m}^2\text{)} - 40.$$

41. (New) The leather-like sheet according to claim 40, wherein it is substantially made of a fiber material.

42. (New) The leather-like sheet according to claim 41, wherein said fiber material is fibers of a non-elastic polymer.

43. (New) The leather-like sheet according to claim 40, wherein it is raised at least on one surface.

44. (New) The leather-like sheet according to claim 40, wherein, in an abrasion test by the Martindale method, the abrasion loss after 20000 times of abrasion is 20 mg or less and the number of pills is 5 or less.

45. (New) The leather-like sheet according to claim 40, wherein said ultra-fine fibers are made of a polyester and/or a polyamide.

46. (New) The leather-like sheet according to claim 40, wherein it contains ultra-fine fibers with a fiber length of 1 to 10 cm entangled with each other.

47. (New) The leather-like sheet according to claim 40, wherein said fiber material contains fine particles.

48. (New) The leather-like sheet according to claim 47, wherein the particle diameter of said fine particles is from 0.001 to 30 μm .